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The Khalsa

Sardar Singh Rataul, M.A.



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HISTORICAL BACK-GROUND

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) saw that the Punjab had long been a door-mat at the gate of India. People were so mercilessly trampled during the frequent raids of Muslim hordes that they had become utterly weak and helpless. So much so, that the invaders would drive their wives and children like cattle before them to Ghazni and sell them there, but none would raise a finger to save them for fear of torture and death. They had, in fact, succumbed to disgrace and degradation. The Guru's heart bled to see, during one of the Mughal raids, how thousands of men and women were killed. In anguish the Guru sang a plaintive song : "When there was such slaughter and such groaning, O God, didst Thou not feel pain? O Creator, Thou belongest to all. If a powerful person harms an other equally strong, there is no matter for anger, but when a ravenous lion attacks a herd of cows, the master of the herd must show his manliness".

The Guru was determined to turn such herd of cows into lions. He started on his chosen path by

teaching people that God is one. He is the Father of all human beings who are brothers to one another and thus equal. He loves those who love their fellow beings. He is to be realized through NAM, the Name of God, out of which arises the spirit of service and sacrifice.

The Guru denounced the renunciation of family life and advised people to earn their living with hard and honest labour. He organised, *Sangats*, or congregational meetings, and addressed them religious matters in their own tongue which roused their national sentiment. These *Sangats* were linked up together with Guru as their common central light. The followers of the Guru were called the *Sikhs*, or the disciples.

Thus the foundation of Sikhism was laid.

Guru Nanak's choice of his successor, Guru Angad, a house holder, in preference to his sons, who were religious ascetics, practising the life of renunciation of the world, had far-reaching social consequences. The Sikhs have ever since developed as a nation of house holders.

Guru Angad (1504—1552) carried forward the work of consolidation. He devised Punjabi Script, called *Gurmukhi*, and recorded the sayings of Guru Nanak in it. This formed the nucleus of the Sikh Scriptures which later on developed into the Holy

Granth. Guru Angad, thus, made the Sikhs independent of the priestly class, whose domination rested on their knowledge of Sanskrit. Moreover, it was an important step towards separation of Sikhism from Hinduism whose sacred scriptures are written in Sanskrit, which, according to the Hindus, is the 'speech of gods'.

Guru Amar Dass, the third Guru (1479-1574) was an active preacher, great organiser and an administrator of a high order. He organised the Sikhs into 22 Sangat Centres and strengthened the system. He declared passive and recluse '*Udasis*', who were regarded as almost equally the disciples of Guru Nanak with the direct adherents of Guru Angad, to be entirely different from active and domestic Sikhs and thus prevented the infant faith from disappearing as one of many sects.

He established the *Langar*, or free kitchen, an institution with potentialities of far-reaching social reforms. Irrespective of social discrimination based on caste, creed or rank, all who came would sit together at these public meals. Even the greatest of the Mughal Emperors, Akbar, the Great, had to take food from Guru's *Langar*, at Goindwal before he could have the pleasure and honour of meeting the Guru. Upto this day whenever and whenever there is a big gathering of the Sikhs, the Guru's *Langar* supplies food to all without distinction. Free Kitchen is attached to every *Gurdwara* or temple

where the same rules are always observed. This institution is a unique feature of the Sikh Faith

Guru Ram Dass the fourth Guru (1534-1581) strengthened the system of *Sangats* by the appointment of regular missionaries, called *Masands*. He linked them all with a central place of pilgrimage, called Amritsa, the Pool of Immortality. He substituted Sikh festivals in place of Hindu ones and replaced Brahmanical form of marriage ceremony by Anand-marriage with Panjabi rituals. The Guru started a crusade against *Sati*, or a widow's burning herself in her husband's funeral pyre, and against the practice of killing infant daughters.

He thus purified the society of many evils and laid the foundation of separate Sikh ideals and practices and distinguished from those of the Hindus. Guru Ram Dass made a lasting contribution to Sikh religious and social solidarity by founding a central place of worship and gathering at a place, then known after his name as Ram Dass pur, now Amritsar. It was, in fact, the name given by the Guru to the sacred tank dug in 1577. The city that rose round it was later renamed after this tank. Ever since Amritsar has been a religious Capital of the Sikhs.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru (1563-1606) was a born poet and philosopher, a great organizer and statesman, and a man of great vigour and

resourcefulness. He developed a system of collecting the loveful offerings of the Sikhs by the Masands and completed the project of building the Golden Temple in the midst of the Tank, one of the most striking sights of the world. He founded the sacred town of Tarn Taran in 1590 and opened an asylum for the lepers there. The crowning work of Guru's life was the compilation of the *Adi Guru Granth Sahib*, or the Sikh Bible. It was completed and installed in the Central Temple (Golden Temple) at Amritsar in 1606. The Sacred Book developed and enhanced the religious consciousness of the Sikhs and fixed their religious belief.

The growing popularity of the Sikh Gurus, their faith, and the stately magnificence of their *Darbar*, or court, created a stir in the Muslim officials. They left greatly Perturbed to see that even some Muslims were embracing Sikhism. The Guru was reported to emperor Jahangir as having helped the rebel prince, Khusrao. He was summoned but before his departure the Guru appointed his son Har Gobind as his successor and said, "We have tried to carry on the mission of Guru Nanak in perfect peace and non-violence. Now, too, I shall suffer calmly all that is in store for me, for the love of the Creator and His creation. But if that also fails to move the emperor to senses, consider, my son that the tyrant any bigoted ruler and his officials are too dehumanised to feel any sense of remorse

at their shameful doings. It would then be unwise to submit to any more suffering quietly. Sit fully armed on your throne and urge the Sikhs to gird up their lions to fight the tyrants".

The Guru was taken to Lahore, imprisoned and tortured to death on May 30, 1606. This released the forces of bitter resentment throughout the country.

Guru Har Gobind, the sixth Guru (1595—1644) had seen that calm and quiet suffering of his father had no softening effect on the stone hearted oppressors. Therefore, in his policy he was influenced by the excitement of the chase developed in his hunting expeditions, the feelings of an injured son, the responsibilities of a temporal chief and the duties of a religious head. So now came a turning point in the policy of the Sikh Guru towards the bigoted rulers. To meet the exigency of the times he organized the Sikhs into brave soldiers and ruled his people as a priest-king. He fought some successful battles with the imperial troops but not an inch of territory was ever occupied. The martial impulse given by Guru Har Gobind further separated the Sikhs from all Hindu sects too far away to be in danger of relapse.

There was, however, a full for sometime under Guru Har Rai (1630-1661) Guru Har Krishan (1656-1664) and Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675).

Now Aurangzeb felt securely established as Emperor of India. To wipe out his sins he now

Pursued the policy of forcible conversions of Hindus to please the Muslims. in religious intolerance he surpassed all his predecessors and the Hindus all over India began to groan under him. Special taxes were imposed on the Hindus, and those, who were too poor to pay, turned Muslims for fear of being tortured by the collectors. General orders were issued on April 9, 1669, 'to demolish all schools and temples of the infidels and to put down their religious teachings and practices'.

Guru Tegh Bahadur arranged a tour to all the important Hindu centres in India with the object of organizing and training the Sikhs for the achievement of his mission. On his return to Anand Pur, some Brahmans of Kashmir came to him and related the heart-rending stories of forcible conversions in their province. They begged the Guru for help. The Guru was deeply pained to hear the woeful tales and said, 'Sacrifice of yet another noble soul like Guru Arjan may change the hearts and souls of these tyrants'. Hearing this his son, Gobind Rai, later Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru (1666—1708) who was only nine years old, said, "Father who else is holier than yourself for such a noble cause?"

The Guru was very pleased to hear such brave words coming from his son. The height and depth of Gobind Singh's spirit at such a tender age convinced his father of his ability and capacity to carry on the

mission of the Guru after him. Therefore, addressing the Brahmans, the Guru said, "Go and tell the Governor or the Emperor that you would embrace Islam if I do so".

Aurangzeb flared up with anger to hear this. Guru Tegh Bahadur was consequently summoned to Delhi and beheaded in the Chandni Chowk where now stands a grand Gurdwara known as Sees Ganj. The magnitude of the task that now lay before Gobind Singh, a child of 9, can better be imagined than described. But was he then to be owed down? No, never! A person of his calibre the world has yet to produce!

He retired to the hills and on the bank of the Jamna, on the land offered by the ruler of Nahan State, he built a fort called Paunta. Here he applied himself very closely to his all-round education. Besides being well versed in Punjabi, Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian, in which he composed excellent poetry, he devoted himself to manly exercises such as riding, hunting, swimming, archery and sword-play.

Thus fully equipped for the task ahead, Gobind Singh returned to Anand Pur. He organized the Sikhs and had several encounters with the Hindu hill-chiefs on the one hand and the muslim Imperial Troops on the other. He soon realised that general mass of people were

sadly wanting in nerve and physical strength. Their spiritual, mental and moral faculties were dulled to the extreme by the fear of tortures committed under the so-called religious zeal of the Muslim rulers. Inferior food, aversion to manly exercises and sports, religious intolerance of the rulers and want of illustrious traditions were some of the chief causes of their chicken-heartedness. The experience of his various encounters and especially of the battle of Bhangani had clearly shown him how dangerous and unwise it was to place any reliance in weak volunteers and mercenary soldiers.

It was time, therefore, that the sikhs shook off the dreamy ways of saints and turned active soldiers to put down evil forces which were playing havoc with the lives and the religious sentiments of the people. To rise to the occasion, they must all be transformed into a class of brave, courageous and selfless people who would feel the troubles and miseries of others as if they were their own and would throb to action and be prepared to lay down their lives heroically, rather than show their backs to the enemies.

Himself a rare combination of the learning, piety and calmness of a religious head, the strength and spirit of a brave warrior the sagacity of a military commander, the psychological insight and perseverance of a social reformer, the Guru set

himself to the great task of creating such a class out of a hopeless confusion and utter helplessness that reigned supreme.

He pondered deep and long for the creation of such a sect after his mind it should be physically, mentally and spiritually healthy, humming with life and activity, firm in its implicit faith in God, changed from the dreamy sort of saints to robust and masculine sort of saint-soldiers, optimistic in their outlook under trying circumstances of any description, willing and ready "to obey the leader as a true soldier whose motto is, to do and die" anxious to serve and prepared to make the highest sacrifice for the sacred cause of mankind set by the Gurus, and free from superstition and any considerations of caste distinctions.

The mind was at last made up.

Invitations for a big representative gathering on the Baisakhi day were sent far and wide and great preparations were started for a new epoch in the social history of India and the religious history of the world. All began to look forward to the dawn of the memorable day with great anticipations. The Sikhs from different parts of the country began to pour in.

Anand Pur wore a smiling, busy and expectant look.

THE SACRIFICE

A day before baisakhi (April, 1699) a big *Diwan*, religious assembly, was held at Anand Pur in an open space in the midst of profuse verdure. On one corner of this extensive plain was pitched a tent fitted with curtains down to the doors to shut out the curious eye from watching what was happening inside "*Asa Di War*" (hymns sung early in the morning) was over but the Guru had not yet graced the *Diwan* with his presence. He was said to be inside the tent. All anxious eyes were fixed on the tent and every one was getting impatient to see the Guru.

At the opportune time the Guru came out of the tent with sword glistening in the sun, blood-shot eyes and stern countenance. Reaching the Assembly he poised aloft the blade and said in a thundering tone, "Is there any one of my beloved Sikhs present here who would offer his head to this sword for a great religious cause?"

All were thrown into silence. For a time there was no reply but the Guru kept on repeating his demand. There was the third call, "Will the sword of your Guru go into the sheath unquenched? Is n't there a daring son of a brave mother who would lay down his life for religion?"

At this there rose from his seat a man with folded hands and said in a clear low voice, "O True King, my head is at your service."

Who was he ? Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore !
 "You have done very well, Daya Ram. Blessed you are !" So saying, the Guru seized him by the arm and led him into the tent.

All assembled there, turned pale and speechless. Soon there was heard a thud of sword striking something vigorously. Blood streamed forth from under the tent. Could there be any doubt now that all was over with Bhai Daya Ram ?

In a moment, the Guru emerged out of the tent with the sword dripping blood and coming to the assembly he said. "Blessed, indeed, is Bhai Daya Ram ! who could be a true Sikh than he ? But another sacrifice is required. Who would offer himself this time ?"

A hush fell on the multitude. Many who had come to enjoy the holy songs and get *Karah Parshad*, or Holy Food, began to slink away. The people felt convinced that the Guru was off his head and had gone wild that day. Terror-stricken with what had already happened they hung down their heads and felt if blood had frozen in their veins. Some cursed the very idea of their having come to attend this meeting. No one replied.

The Guru made a third call. Bravo ! There stood up Dharm Dass, a Jat of Delhi. Holding in folded

hands the ends of a piece of cloth put round his neck out of respect for the Guru and hanging down his head in deep reverence, he said in full and clear tone. "Your Holiness blessed would be this humble servant of yours if this head of his feeds your sword." So saying, he came up to the Guru while all other people were wonder-struck to see that there still breathed a soul who, fully knowing what fate awaited him in the tent, had offered himself so gracefully.

The Guru took him to the tent and dealt with him likewise. Now many who were in conflict all the while, quietly slipped away, some even remarked that the Guru had lost his reason, others ran to the Guru's mother and implored her to intervene and save the innocent Sikhs from being butchered. She accordingly sent a message to call her son but the Guru was too eager in the pursuit of his own course of action to pay any heed to any person or any message.

The sacrifice was not yet complete ! Still another head was needed to feed the dripping sword ! The Guru looked all the more fierce, and called out for another Sikh to lay down his life. Now Mohkam Chand, a washerman or cloth printer of Dwrka in Gujrat, offered himself. He was taken to the tent and treated as others before him.

When the Guru made the fourth call for the sacrifice many began to think that he would

kill them all. So, some openly started running away in fright and terror. But, Lo ! there came forward a harber of Bidar, named Sahib Chand, Clasping his hands in an attitude of prayer he spoke out. "My head is at your service, Lord. Do with it as you please." The Guru let him to the tent and returned as on previous occasions with sword stained with newly shed blood, in hand.

The assembly was thinning every time but now there was great consternation in and flight of the remaining Sikhs. Only a few Sikhs who were staunch in their faith in the Guru and had cast in their lot with him in weal and woe remained sitting. Himmat Rai, a water carrier or cook of Jagan Nath, answered the Guru's fifth and the last call.

Now the stream of blood flowing out of the tent had reacaed quite close to the assembly. Reading the eager feelings of the brethren-in faith expressed throught their looks for the last sight of the remains of the five martyrs, the Guru signalled. All atonce the curtains of the tent were rolled up and lo ! there stood before their eyes, all the five patriots, clad in splendid safforn garments, looking so grand, dignified and radiant with exalting divine bliss !

With swords gleaming and glistening in their hands they marched to the assembly and bowed to the Guru with all respect and humility. The audience experienced a strange admixture of gaping wonder

pleasant surprise and serene elation. The hair stood on end, and the hearts melted and found expression in tears that trickled down their cheeks ! Once killed the Five had come to life and were standing grand and glowing with gracious bliss before their very eyes !

No sooner had they recovered from the quagmire of their own minds than the Guru addressed them thus, "My dear Sikhs ! Be of good cheer. These five Sikhs have stood the test. They have shown me such devotion that I am now prepared to sacrifice my own life for them. They are in my from and I am in theirs. They who find any difference between us would be sadly mistaken. To disillusion you all; let me tell you that for the test I had killed five goats instead."

The assembly had by now thickened a good deal by the return of those Sikhs who had fled for fear of losing their lives. When all came to know the whole story staged before them, they felt shamefully small and contemptible. They repented awfully, but what good was it now ? Some summoned up courage, stood up and humbly said to the Guru, "We are ashamed of our very existence here. O Lord, We are cowards and weak. Pardon us, O Great King ! We now feel a rush of new blood in our veins. We are at your feet, ready for any sacrifice !"

"My brave Sikhs," replied the Guru, "have patience your test is not far. We will be out before long to

foil the fell designs of the rulers who are dehumanised and lost to all sense of tolerance for the people of other religions. They have set at naught all canons of religion, society and morality in carrying out their evil motives. Not hundreds but thousands of heads would be needed for the great task ahead. From now onwards consider your heads as trust of the Guru to be offered when demanded."

The Ranjit drum was now sounded. Those, who had so far kept away for shame, joined the assembly and the shouts of "*Sat Siri Akal*" rent the sky. Seating the Victorious Five beside him the Guru proclaimed to the whole assembly, "In the time of Guru Nanak there was found one devout Sikh, namely, Bhai Lehna, later Guru Angad. It is a matter of great joy for us all that now there are found five Sikhs entirely devoted to the Guru. All hail I Hail to these Dear Five who have given me an earnest of the future greatness and glory of the Sikhs! These shall lay the foundation of new Sikhism and the true religion shall become current and famous throughout the world."

The Guru then announced that the *Diwan*, or assembly, would be held the next day on the Baisakhi Festival and that all should make it a point to attend. The assembly broke up and all returned to their homes, full of soul-stirring tale to tell, while a good many of them were losing themselves to feel what had happened and what part they had played in it.

THE ORGANIZATION

On the Baisakhi Festival day, Sammat 1756 (13th April, 1699) a well attended Public Darbar was held at Kesgarh. The Guru and the Five Sikhs all arrayed in military dress and arms, were occupying their seats on a raised platform. The Guru stood up and proclaimed, "The object of our meeting today, is to form an organization which should profess complete devotion, unflinching faith, and undivided allegiance to the teachings of the Sikh Gurus which should be ready to face any danger, undergo any hardships and endure trials and tortures of any magnitude in defence of their faith and for the protection of the weak and the helpless from tyranny, which should defy all invidious distinctions of caste and embrace all human beings as brothers. The institution of '*Charn Pauhal*' (drinking the foot-wash, the water with which the Guru had bathed his feet at the time of prayer) has been in vogue ever since the time of Guru Nanak. This has led to great humility. But the times have changed. The minds of the tyrant rulers have been too perverted and brutalized to be softened down to religious tolerance and social justice by the quiet sacrifices and martyrdoms of the Sikhs and their Gurus. The Sikhs can now be preserved as a nation only by bravery and skill in arms. It is, therefore absolutely essential that for the accomplishment of such an

efficient organization, the Sikhs should be formally initiated into the faith of Gurus and regenerated by some entirely new sacred process into a race of warriors. Therefore, I make a departure from another ancient Hindu custom of *Charn Pauhal* and henceforth institute the custom of baptism by water, stirred with a *Khanda*, a double-edged sword. Thus born of dagger, they will be turned from 'jackals to lions' and called *Singhs* or lions, instead of the Sikhs."

Now the Guru had an iron vessel brought to him. As he kept on stirring the water with his *Khanda* he recited five *Banees* or Sacred Verses and offered prayer. The *Amrit*, or nectar, was now ready. To show its potency to the Sikhs, the Guru put a little of it aside for birds. Two sparrows came and filled their beaks with it. There and then, they started a fight and died by mutual slaughter. Thereupon appeared mother Sahib Kaur Ji, the Guru's wife, and requested the Guru to permit her to put sweets into the nectar to infuse sweetness into the *Khalsa*. The Guru accepted her suggestion and welcomed her there as he was going to beget the *Khalsa* as his sons and without a mother no son could be born. She put some sugar crystals called *Patashas* into the holy water. The Guru baptized the five Sikhs with this nectar or *Amrit*. The baptism consisted in sipping the *Amrit* and submitting to a sprinkling with it—a ceremony

altogether different from anything in Hindu or Muslism ritual.

All drank from one vessel, so that they might feel like one, breaking all caste barriers ! The Guru then sprinkled some of the *Amrit* on their hair and dashed some in their faces making them repeat after him *Wah-i-Guru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wah-i-Guru Ji ki Fateh". !* (Hail the Khalsa of God, Hail the victory of the Supreme.)

They were taught to believe in one God and the mission of the ten Gurus. They were to lead clean lives and to avoid all strong drinks and the use of tobacco. There was to be no caste among them so that the lowest of them were equal to the highest. All were to wear the same signs the *Kakkars*; that is long un-cut hair, a comb, a pair of shorts, an iron bracelet and a sword. They were all to call themselves *Singhs* or lions.

These five true Sikh heroes-formed the immortal nucleus of the Khalsa. They were now called *Piaras*, or Beloved Ones and were named, Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, Mohkam Singh, Sahib Singh, and Himmat Singh.

Thus *The Khalsa* or Pure Faith came into being. The Guru was so enamoured his own creation that he declared the Khalsa his Master and bowed before the Beloved Five in reverence.

THE REVOLUTION

Nowhere in the history of any religion in the world is there any example of the Master becoming the Disciple. Democracy even in Politics is a recent development much less anywhere in any religion. Here, too, the Guru's contribution to human dignity is invaluable,

He had now more *Amrit* prepared got down from his elated seat and standing with folded hands before his Beloved Ones begged for *Amrit*. They were astonished at such a request and expressed their unworthiness for such a high position. There upon the Guru said, "I am the son of the immortal God. It is in obedience to His orders and with His blessings that I have established this form of baptism. Those who accept this, shall henceforth be called as the Khalsa. I have given you my form, my appearance and my glory. You are the Khalsa—The Pure. The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me. As Guru Nanak, the founder of the Faith seated Guru Anged on the throne, so have I made you also a Guru. Therefore, administer the *Amrit* to me without any hesitation".

Accordingly the Guru was baptized, and named Gobind Singh in place of Gobind Rai by which name he had been previously called.

By getting baptism from his Beloved Ones the Guru set an example of democracy in religion and

raised his disciples to the status of the Guru. So much so, that he ordained that henceforth the unanimous decision of the Five Khalsas, pure in heart, would have the approval and sanction of the Guru and would be called *Gurmatta*, or the Guru's decision.

It may be noted here that Christ called himself the son of God, while Mohammad a messenger of God and an intermediary between Him and the Muslims Hindu Avatars are worshipped as incarnation of God. But Guru Gobind Singh declared that he was an ordinary human being. Lest the Sikhs should forget it and fall in the weakness of deifying him like the Hindus he declared that it would be the greatest blasphemy to pay him divine honour. The Guru says in the *Vichittar Natak* :—

“Whoever calls me the Supreme,
Shall fall into the pit of hell.
Recognize me as God's servant only,
Have no doubts whatever about this,
I am but the slave of the Lord,
A beholder of the wonders of His creation.”

THE KHALSA

The Mission :—After administering baptism to his Beloved Five the Guru spoke at length on his mission and the duties and responsibilities of the Khalsa. According to the Persian historian, Ghulam Mohai-Ud-Din, the official news-writer of Aurangzeb, stationed at Anand-Pur, sent the following report of the Guru's

Proclamation dated the 1st of Baisakh, Sammat 1756 (13th April, 1699).

“Let all of you embrace one creed and obliterate all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes abandon the different rules of conduct laid down for their guidance adopt the one form of adoration and become brothers. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken of with reverence in the Hindu religion or adore incarnations as Rama, Krishana, Brahma and Durga, but all should believe in one God and in the teaching of Guru Nanak and his successors. Let people of all the four castes take my Baptism, eat out of the same vessel and feel no disgust or contempt for one another.

In the *Vachitar Natak* the Guru Himself says about his mission :

“For this purpose was I born.
And this let all the virtuous understand.
To advance righteousness, to emancipate the good.
And to destroy all evil doers root and branch.”

The Change : Through his baptism the Guru infused his very spirit into his Sikhs and invested them with his own magnificent personality. His impress elevated and altered the very constitution of their body and mind and made them enviable models of physical strength, dauntless courage, and selfless service and

sacrifice. What a tremendous and change, indeed ! Sweepers, barbers, water-carriers and the very dregs of society who had never so much as touched the swords, turned, under the stimulating leadership of the Guru, into doughty warriors, who would never shirk but rush to the very jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru. In the encounters, that the Guru had with the Hill-Rajas and the Imperial Army, the Singhs of the Guru were always more than a match for their opponents. Their courage, self-confidence, and fortitude carried them through all the severest trials of life. All men women and children bore up excellently when they were subjected to unspeakable tortures by the bigoted rulers, for, were they not the true disciples of great Guru Gobind Singh who had sacrificed for the right cause his revered father, all the four of his dear minor sons and hundreds of his beloved Sikhs and then in a spirit unprecedented anywhere in the annals of human history ? These are the tales that make the hair stand on end and the eyes bedew with tears !

The Singhs proved to the letter the declaration of the Guru.

“Sheep will I turn into lions.

Against Mighty kings will I Pit the Penniless and the low.

By sparrows will I get the falcons Plucked.

One will I Pit against a lac and quarter.

All this will I do, sure and true.

Then alone shall I bear the named Gobind Singh Guru."

The Essence :—Unlike the founders of many other religions. Guru Gobind Singh not only emphasized the regulation of private conduct of his Sikhs but also of the collective conduct of the organization, as a whole for the service of mankind. The essence of Sikhism is thus *NAM*, or adoration of God by keeping Him always in our minds and repeating his name, and *SEWA*, or service of humanity. God is to be realized through the cultivation of these two virtues.

The Guru's Khalsa is *Nemee*, regular in meditation on the name of God and *Premee*, true love of all His creation.

The Panth :—The institution of *Sangats* started and guided by the previous Gurus had, by now, developed into an organization sufficiently responsible to carry on its functions even without the personal guidance of the Guru, and as there was to be no personal Guru now, the *Sangat* was invested with the collective Guruship and named the *Panth*, the Guru incarnate.

As already mentioned, the unanimous decisions of the *Sangat* are called the *Gurmata*s, or the Guru's decisions. The *Gurmata*s, made by the representative *Sangat* at Akal Takhat Sahib, Amritsar have always had the force of religious injunctions for the

Khalsa. There is no going back on the Panthic decision even if it is rush into the very mouth of a cannon.

The Khalsa repeated the history of its traditional bravery, fortitude and non-violence during the early twenties of this century when the *Gurdwaras* were liberated from the *Mahants* or priests at the cost of very great sacrifices. Lathi charge or the rain of bullets, but the Khalsa would march on in obedience to the order of the *Panth* !

Infact, the *Panth* is the Guru and the Guru is the *Panth* !

The Granth :—The Guru Granth Sahib, or the Treasury of Divine Song, is the Holy Book of the Sikhs. It comprises the hymns of the first five Gurus and the ninth Guru. Besides this, there are the writings of 15 Hindu and Mohammadan *Bhagats* or devouts of high and low castes and even of some out castes like Ravi Das. It is clear demonstration of the fact that in Sikhism all true devouts of God are equally worthy of respect and reverence, no matter what religion caste, creed or social status they belong to. The Granth thus crystalises the religious belief of Sikhism as preached by all the Gurus.

When Guru Gobind Singh was fatally stabbed by a Pathan at Nander, he told his followers that the end of his earthly existence was not far. The Sikhs

respectfully and with heavy hearts and tearful eyes enquired who was to succeed him. The Guru replied, "Believe in one God who will always protect you. The work of the Gurus is completed. Henceforth their spirit would live in the Sacred Granth and the Khalsa. Wherever Five Khalsas are assembled and abide by the teachings of the Gurus I am in their midst. The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa, for in the Khalsa is found the spirit of the Gurus. To get inspiration with the presence of the Gurus, the Holy Granth, the Divine Words, is your Guru from today. Obey the Granth, it is the visible body of the Guru. Let him who desireth to meet me, diligently search its hymns".

The word is the Guru.

And the Guru is the Word.

The Word is the nectar of all nectars.

(Guru Ram Dass)

After this the Guru placed five pice and a coconut before the Granth and bowed in reverence.

The Holy Granth is thus the visible form of invisible Gurus whose teachings are embodied in it. It conveys to the Sikhs the message of their Gurus and therefore, itself is the Guru. Some people erroneously believe that the Sikhs worship the Granth. No. Far from it, as that would be idolatry. In the Granth are crystalised the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. It is, therefore, the Guru incarnation and the Sikhs must bow before it in reverence, it is not God

incarnation that they should worship it. The Khalsa worships God and God alone.

I do not go to Haj to Ka'ba,

Nor do I go to any Tiratha for Worship,

I worship only the one God, and no body else.

(Guru Arjan Dev)

Worship God and you get all you wish,

Worship others and waste your life,

(Guru Amar Dass)

The Uniform :—The uniform of the Khalsa has great psychology behind it. Guru Gobind Singh, while only nine years of age was deeply pained to know that when his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was beheaded in Chandni Chowk at Delhi, some Sikhs, who were interrogated by Mughal officials about their faith, had denied, for fear of torture, that they were Sikhs. So while turning 'lambs' into 'lions', the Guru enjoined upon them to wear long uncut hair (Kesh) thereby giving his Khalsa such a unique and distinctive appearance that even one in a thousand would stand out clear.

We have already seen why at the time of baptism of the Five Dear Ones, the Guru stirred the water with a *Khanda*. Sword has always been a symbol of power and self-respect. So the Guru made it incumbent upon the Khalsa to wear a *Kirpan*, a sword. The other articles, a Khalsa must always wear, are *Kangha*, a comb; *Kachha*, a pair of shorts

and a *Kara*, a steel bracelet. These five, each beginning with "K" are called the *Five Kakkars* or signs of the Khalsa. Besides this, the Khalsa has a common surname, *Singh* or lion.

The Rules of Conduct :—The principal rules of conduct of the Khalsa may be summoned up as follows :

1. At initiation a Sikh should take no other baptismal water but the *Amrit*, stirred with a double-edged sword. He shall then be called a *Singh*.
2. Wherever there are five Singhs there the Khalsa Faith shall be considered as completely represented. A Singh desirous of seeing the Guru will find him in an assembly of the Sikhs.
3. Every Khalsa shall believe in the Immortal God and wear all the five *Kakkars*.
4. There shall be no caste distinction between one Khalsa and the other. Every Khalsa shall be *Kritnash*, disregarder of all prejudices and distinctions based on professions or trades; *Kul-nash*, disregarder of all considerations based on birth in a high or low family; *Dharm-nash*, disregarder of orthodoxy or rituals of his former faith; and *Karm-nash*, disregarder of countless rituals or ceremonies enjoined in the Hindu religion, for man would be judged from his actions alone.
5. A Khalsa shall honour and revere Guru Nanak and his successors and follow their teachings as embodied in the Holy Granth. The Khalsa should occasionally repair to Amritsar and have a dip in the sacred tank.

6. The Khalsa shall prize and cherish arms and shall delight in war, when all peaceful means to right a wrong fail. Whosoever kills his foe in the battle or even if himself subdued does not lose his heart, shall be exalted both in this and the next world.
7. Whatever wealth a Khalsa brings home, should be his honest earning and out of this he should dedicate one tenth to the cause dear to the Guru. He should regard the mouth of the poor as the receptacle of the Guru, whatever is put there reaches the Guru.
8. The Khalsa is distinct from the Hindu and the Muslim. He is not to believe in the Hindu temples or their idols, their sacred places, their gods and goddesses, their modes of worship, their Mantras and their fasts etc. He is not to have any faith in fasting or the graves of the Muslim saints nor is he to take meat of animals killed in the Mohammadan fashion.
9. The Khalsa should regard the wife, the sister or the daughter of another as his own daughter, sister or mother. He should have nothing to do with gambling, falsehood, theft, tobacco and intoxicants.
10. The Sikhs are freely to inter marry among one another but must not have any social or matrimonial relations with smokers with persons who kill their daughters and with the descendants or followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal, Ram Rai or Masands who had fallen away from the tests and principles of Guru Nanak.

11. The salutation among the Singhs shall be 'Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa Sri Wah-i-Guru Ji Ki Fateh'. or Lord's is the Khalsa Lord's is the Victory.
12. Smoking, cutting the hair, eating the flesh of animals killed in the semitic Muslim Manner and sexual intercourse with any but one's own wedded wife are the cardinal breaches. Any one guilty of any of these must show repentance, pay a fine, promise not to offend any more and be re-baptized otherwise he or she stands excommunicated from the Khalsa.

The attributes : Born of and brotherly to the Hindus, the Khalsa is yet a distinct community, entirely different from them in outward form, conception of God and Gurus, language and script of the scriptures, religious rites, mode of worship, social ceremonies and in its attitude towards castes and creeds.

The Khalsa symbolises the oneness of God and all humanity and the abolition of caste barriers.

The Khalsa is a peaceful and progressive brother-hood dedicated to the service of humanity.

The Khalsa is a new order of society in which 'the lowest is equal to the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes.'

The Khalsa is an organisation of the Sikhs into soldier-saints for the preservation and development of godly principles of conduct initiated, practised and propagated by the Great Gurus.

The Khalsa is a community gifted with a rare combination of child-like magnanimity in daily life, lamb like humility in peace and lion-like bravery in war.

The Khalsa is a life of invincible optimism, serene smiles at one's own sorrows and of action to alleviate the sufferings of others.

The Khalsa represents a victorious challenge to any mighty political power counting on 'Might is right'.

The Khalsa is a kingdom from where lust, greed, idolatory superstitions pride, pessimism and idolatory, are banished and what reign supreme are : faith in one God, repetition of His Name, simplicity of habits, humility of temper, truthfulness of disposition, earning through honest labour and sharing it with the needy resignation to His Will, prayers for the good of humanity at large and sympathy for the afflicted.

The Khalsa is an institution with a cosmopolitan out-look based on love for all, malice to none, and standing for peace, progress and prosperity of all without distinction.

The Khalsa is an unparalleled and magnificent structure of society the elements of which were cemented together by Ten Master-Masons for over a period of two centuries with the spirit of Love for all, Service of Society and Sacrifice for the right cause.

The Khalsa is a programme of life concerned with conduct rather than creed and covering all aspects of human life—social, economic, political moral, religious and spiritual.

The Khalsa is a religious sect which banishes from its fold the traditional enemies of social, moral and religious life of India, such as asceticism, world-negation attitude towards life, idolatory, *Varan Ashram*—social order based on caste system, and the Priestly class.

The Khalsa is a nation of devotees, warriors and martyrs the examples of whose privations and sufferings for their Faith stand unrivalled in human history.

The Khalsa is a fragrant flower of which the seed was sown by Guru Nanak and nourished by his successors with their very spirit and blood.

The Khalsa is the ideal of humanity the marvellous creation the greatest contribution and the crowning glory of Great Guru Gobind Singh.

Thus, natural in form, modern in mind, progressive in views optimistic in out-look believer in the oneness of God and of all humanity embodiment of service and sacrifice, imbued with religious humility, imbued with martial spirit and with traditions of unparalleled glory the Khalsa occupies a proud position in the comity of nations. Undoubtedly, the principles of the Khalsa rule over the whole world !

How Great, Grand and Glorious the Khalsa is !
May the followers of the Great Gurus live up to the ideals of the Khalsa !
